

Message Text

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PAGE 01 GUATEM 06028 011613Z

47

ACTION AGR-08

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 ISO-00 SWF-01 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00

EB-06 FRB-01 INR-07 NSAE-00 RSC-01 TRSE-00 XMB-04

OPIC-06 SP-02 CIEP-02 LAB-03 SIL-01 OMB-01 NSC-05

SS-15 STR-04 CEA-01 PA-02 PRS-01 USIA-15 /102 W

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R 011530Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4882

INFO AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

UNCLAS GUATEMALA 6028

PASS AGRIC/FAS

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR, GT

SUBJECT: VOLCANIC ERUPTION LOSSES

REF: GUATEMALA 5831

1. AGATT THIS WEEK TOURED PACIFIC COAST AND WESTERN HIGHLANDS REGIONS IN WHICH CROPS WERE DAMAGED BY PROLONGED HEAVY SHOWERS OF SAND AND CINDERS FROM ERUPTION VOLCANO FUEGO DURING MID-OCTOBER. CONTRARY TO PREVIOUS REPORTS, VOLCANO SANTIAGUITO, WHICH HAS BEEN CONTINUOUSLY ACTIVE 30 YEARS, CAUSED NO AGRICULTURAL DAMAGE THAT PERIOD.

2. PRESIDENT LAUGERUD SAID YESTERDAY RICHEST AGRICULTURAL SECTOR GRAVELY EFFECTED IN MAGNITUDE THAT WILL BE FELT BY ECONOMY 1975. HE SAID VILLAGE OF YEPOCAPA ON FUEGO SLOPES (REFTEL) SUFFERED NEARLY TOTAL LOSS
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PAGE 02 GUATEM 06028 011613Z

OF COFFEE PRODUCTION AMOUNTING TO 38,000 60 KILO BAGS;

ANACAFE REPRESENTATIVE AT SANT LUCIA COTZUMALGUAPA
NEAR YEPOCAPA ESTIMATED 20 PERCENT COFFEE LOSS FOR
REGION. COUNTRY LOSS STILL PUT AT ABOUT 100,000 BAGS
(SEE REFTEL FOR VARIOUS ESTIMATES).

3. LAGUERUD REPORTED LOSS OF 23,000 MANZANAS OF
SESAME SEED PLANTED ON TOTAL 25,000 MANZANAS (1 MANZANA
EQUALS 1.727 ACRES), DESTRUCTION OF 3,350 OF 20,000 AFFECTED
MANZANAS PLANTED TO SECOND CROP CORN, 710 MANZANAS OF RICE,
AND SOME DROP IN MEAT PRODUCTION BECAUSE OF WEIGHT LOSS
OF ANIMALS WHOSE PASTURES WERE SHOWERED WITH SAND.

4. AGATT FOUND THAT MATURE CORN DRYING IN FIELDS WAS UN-
HURT BY FALLING MATERIALS, BUT YOUNG SECOND-CROP CORN
WAS HEAVILY DAMAGED AND PROBABLY WILL PRODUCE VERY FEW
EARS (SECOND CROP CORN PRODUCTION IS MINOR IN AFFECTED
PACIFIC AREAS EXCEPT IN AGRARIAN REFORM SETTLEMENTS;
PRINCIPAL CROPS ARE COTTON, SUGARCANE, AND BEEF). AGATT
FOUND NO DAMAGE TO CANE, BUT COTTON GROWERS IN IMPORTANT
TIQUISATE REGION GUESS LOSSES AT 20-25 PERCENT. HE FOUND
COTTON PLANTS BROKEN BY WEIGHT OF SAND AND BENT DOWN
TO 3-4 FEET IN HEIGHT WHERE WEEK AGO THEY TOWERED TO 6-7
FEET; ALREADY NEW LEAVES ARE APPEARING. SAND YET
ON LEAVES WILL MAKE HARVESTING DIFFICULT AND PROBABLY
WILL DAMAGE GINS.

5. COFFEE DAMAGE ONLY SLIGHT IN QUEZALTENANGO AREA,
BUT BROAD CARDAMOM LEAVES SEVERELY BURNED; IMPORTANT
GROWER SAYS CURRENT CROP UNHURT BUT PRODUCTION PROBABLY
WILL BE REDUCED 1975. ONE GROWER DISPLAYED BURNS ON
NURSERY COFFEE SEEDLINGS SCHEDULED FOR PLANTING NEXT MAY.

6. CATTLEMEN USED TRACTORS TO RAKE PASTURE GRASS WITH
BROKEN BRANCHES IN ORDER DISLODGE SAND. TWO HEAVY RAINS
THIS WEEK IN TIQUISATE WASHED SAND AWAY AND CATTLEMEN
ARE BREATHING FREELY AGAIN. IN RETALHULEU, WHERE BOTH
COTTON AND PASTURES WERE DAMAGED, RAINS ARE STILL
ABSENT. GROWER THERE SAID SECOND CROP CORN IS RUINED,
AND SHORTAGE INEVITABLE.

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PAGE 03 GUATEM 06028 011613Z

7. COFFEE GROWER IN RETALHULEU AREA SAID HIS CROP UNHURT,
BUT OVERALL DAMAGE TO AGRICULTURE AMOUNTED TO NEARLY 50
PERCENT IN AREA. HE SAID FARMERS NEED CROP DEBT MORATORIUM
TO ALLOW THEM TO PAY OFF 1974 PRODUCTION LOANS IN 3-4
YEARS. LAUGERUD ANNOUNCED SUCH A DEBT MORATORIUM YESTERDAY.

8. GRAIN SORGHUM IS READY FOR HARVEST AND UNHURT BY SAND.

9. VICE MINISTER OF AGRICUTURE TOLD AGATT THAT SESAME
AND NEW CORN PLANTINGS ARE NEARLY TOTAL LOSSES.
SUBSISTENCE CROP LOSSES IN 13 AGRARIAN REFORM SETTLEMENTS
ARE 70 PERCENT. HE IS CONCERNED ABOUT LONG-RANGE
EFFECT OF FALLING SUBSTANCES ON PLANTS, SOILS, AND
LIVESTOCK DRINKING WATER. THERE ARE ISOLATED REPORTS
OF GASTRIC AILMENTS IN CATTLE.
ANDREWS

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